

## WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

### COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES

DATE: AUGUST 11, 2010

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS THOMAS  
KENNY  
BENTLEY  
STRAINER  
MCDEVITT

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

SHEILA WEAVER, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/ADMINISTRATOR  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
SUPERVISORS STEC  
SOKOL  
TAYLOR

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

SUPERVISORS MERLINO  
LOEB

**REPRESENTING THE OPEN DOOR MISSION:**

REVEREND BRUCE HERSEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
BARBARA HERSEY, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*  
AMANDA ALLEN, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Thomas called the meeting of the Social Services Committee meeting to order at 11:45 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the prior Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Thomas announced that the primary purpose of the Committee meeting was to discuss the proposal relayed by The Open Door Mission for homeless housing within Warren County. He noted that Mr. Taylor was affiliated with The Open Door and wished to address the Committee on the issue.

Mr. Taylor apprised he had developed an informal listing of reasons why contracting with The Open Door Mission for homeless housing would be beneficial to the County, which he read aloud as follows:

1. Low rates. Mr. Taylor noted the Social Services Department was currently paying an average of \$77 per person per night for homeless housing. He added that the proposal introduced by The Open Door Mission would incur a cost of only \$25 per person per night;
2. Location. Because The Open Door Mission was located within the City of Glens Falls, Mr. Taylor advised anyone housed at the facility would have access to emergency services, such as the Glens Falls Hospital and City Police, as well as public transportation which would assist them in seeking jobs. He pointed out that if the Countryside Adult Home was used for homeless housing, the same amenities would not be available as neither public transportation or emergency services were available within walking distance;
3. No initial cost. Mr. Taylor pointed out that contracting with The Open Door would not incur any initial start-up costs to the County as rehabilitating a current structure or constructing a new building would;
4. Free meals and counseling. The Open Door operated a soup kitchen which offered free meals to the needy, Mr. Taylor stated, and counseling services were also available to those seeking them at no cost; and
5. Higher housing limits and management capabilities. Mr. Taylor reminded the Committee members that a total of only ten homeless persons could be housed at the Countryside Adult Home. He noted that The Open Door was able to provide more housing capabilities, as well as better management skills as the staff was already experienced in dealing with the homeless population.

At the conclusion of his report, Mr. Taylor encouraged the Committee members to vote in favor of a new contract with The Open Door Mission for homeless housing, rather than seek out other options which may incur additional costs and management responsibilities for the County.

Paul Dusek, County Attorney/Administrator, apprised that he had also researched this topic extensively with the assistance of several Department Heads, including Sheila Weaver, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, to determine all of the options available to the County. He noted that the Department of Social Services was responsible for securing overnight accommodations for any homeless resident seeking assistance, which they typically did through area motels; he added that although the State provided 50% reimbursement for these expenses, the County was responsible for funding the remaining 50%. In an effort to reduce the costs incurred by the County for homeless housing Mr. Dusek said they had considered many alternative options, such as building a new facility on County-owned property, rehabilitating the old Jail facility, renovating a portion of The Countryside Adult Home, and contracting with The Open Door Mission. He noted that the majority of the options mentioned would require a considerable investment by the County to prepare space for homeless housing; he added that the two most viable options were to either renovate a portion of The Countryside Adult Home or contract with The Open Door. Mr. Dusek advised he had prepared a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages for each option, copies of which were distributed to the Committee members and is also on file with the minutes. For the Committee's benefit, Mr. Dusek proceeded to review the comparison, noting that his conclusions were very similar to those pointed out by Mr. Taylor in that they indicated contracting with The Open Door was the preferable option. He reminded the Committee there were two basic classifications for homeless persons in Warren County, those being either people who did not have sufficient funds to secure housing independently and sex offenders recently released from incarceration. Mr. Dusek advised that in this case the housing provided by The Open Door Mission would only be appropriate for indigents and not for sex offenders.

Mr. Taylor interjected that because the elderly population in Warren County continued to grow, the available space at The Countryside Adult Home might be required for future patients; therefore, he added, alternate arrangements should be made for homeless housing.

In response to a question posed by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Taylor advised The Open Door Mission was not currently able to provide homeless housing for Warren County, but anticipated they would be as of October 1, 2010. Mr. Strainer then asked whether any of the current Madden Hotel patrons would be accepted at The Open Door facility and Reverend Bruce Hersey, Executive Director of The Open Door Mission, replied affirmatively advising they would accept those seeking assistance who were over the age of 18, but noted they would not accept any Class 2 or 3 sex offenders, nor anyone charged with arson related offenses. Rev. Hersey apprised he was educated and experienced in working with homeless people and his goal was to introduce a strictly run program meant to provide temporary housing while encouraging participants to seek employment opportunities that would allow them to become self sufficient. Through these efforts he said he hoped to change the attitude and demeanor of those unable to support themselves; he added that in cases where attitude improvements could not be made to fit the rules of the facility, those persons would be asked to leave. Rev. Hersey noted that he intended to develop a close working relationship with the City of Glens Falls Police Department for assistance when necessary.

Rev. Hersey advised he would be working with Ms. Weaver and other parties to develop plans for the assistance and programs that would be offered by The Open Door Mission. He said they planned to start with a 10 to 12 bed facility and although the initial indications were that they would be able to accept homeless referrals in October, they would prefer more time for site preparation. Rev. Hersey noted they would be working in connection with two similar facilities, the Shelters of Saratoga and the Capital City Mission which was a very large, well run facility operating with no Federal assistance. He advised that both were excellent facilities successful in assisting with the

reintegration of the homeless as productive members of society.

Barbara Hersey, Assistant Director of The Open Door Mission, advised that much of the homeless population had not grown up in households where conventional life skills were taught and part of their program would be to introduce these skills in hopes they would be used to obtain sustainable employment, eliminating the individuals need to rely on public assistance. She stated they had developed arrangements with several area employers who would be willing to accept the risk of employing homeless people, thereby serving as a type of in-house employment agency.

Rev. Hersey reiterated that this would be a facility with very strict regulations, which would not provide entertainment such as televisions or radios, in hopes that those staying there would focus on finding a way to better their lifestyles, rather than wanting to remain in such a rigidly run program.

Mr. Strainer said that while he was supportive of the program ideas presented by Rev. Hersey, he questioned what the County was legally required to provide for those seeking homeless benefits as per State guidelines. Ms. Weaver replied the County was required to provide a bed with clean sheets, showering facilities and food or food stamps. She said they would likely have to revise the current Independent Living Plan, which each homeless person seeking assistance was required to sign and comply with, in order to coincide with the regulations enforced by The Open Door. Ms. Weaver noted that although a number of rules included in the Independent Living Plan would be maintained, such as those that prohibited drugs, alcohol and visitors in lodging facilities, the revised plan would have to be approved by the State which may take additional time to receive. She further noted that the number of homeless persons seeking assistance was typically lower during the summer season and would likely increase during the winter. Ms. Weaver stated she felt contracting with The Open Door could be a positive step for both the County and those seeking assistance, as well.

Following further discussion on the matter, motion was made by Mr. McDevitt, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to enter into a new contract with The Open Door Mission to provide homeless housing at a rate of \$25 per person per night and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 20<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

Mr. Thomas thanked Messrs. Dusek and Taylor for their efforts in reviewing the options available for homeless housing, as well as recommending the option most beneficial to the County.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Weaver who distributed copies of the meeting agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is also on file with the minutes.*

Commencing with Agenda Item I, Ms. Weaver presented a request to fill the vacant position of Caseworker, base salary of \$34,776, due to resignation. She noted that this was a mandated position which received 75% reimbursement and explained the person had resigned from the position in order to pursue her education.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Caseworker, base salary of \$34,776, and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver apprised Agenda Items 2 and 5 through 7 consisted of requests for authorization to attend meeting or convention, which she outlined as follows:

- Item 2. Rachael DuRose and Liana Depew to attend the Cultivating Effective Parent Education program in Albany, NY on November 1, 2010;

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- Item 5. Cheryl Jenkins to attend the Child Care Subsidy Training Program in Albany, NY on October 19 - 20, 2010;
  - Item 6. Lillian Hayes to attend the Child Support Enforcement Training conference in Albany, NY on September 14 - 16, 2010; and
  - Item 7. Suzanne Wheeler to attend the Director of Services Forum in Hamilton, NY on September 22 - 24, 2010.

All of the training courses listed were mandatory, Ms. Weaver advised, and funding was available within the existing budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. McDevitt and carried unanimously to approve all four of the aforementioned travel requests. *Copies of the Request for Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Returning to Agenda Items 3 and 4, Ms. Weaver presented two separate requests for new contracts with Timothy J. Long and Sterling Appraisal Company, both for appraisal services to determine the rental value of the Human Services Building in order to receive appropriate State reimbursements. She added that these were the second and third of the three appraisals required by the State and that each included a total cost not to exceed \$1,500.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve two separate contracts with Timothy J. Long and Sterling Appraisal Company, as outlined above, and the necessary resolutions were authorized for the August 20<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *Copies of both requests are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Weaver continued to Agenda Items 8 and 9 which pertained to two requests to enroll in job-related courses. She explained that Joanna Brierton, Social Welfare Examiner, was seeking permission to enroll in Human Services Ethics and Chemical Addiction courses at Empire State College from September 13<sup>th</sup> through December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010. Ms. Weaver said the knowledge received from both courses would benefit the Social Services Department and assist Ms. Brierton in her efforts to obtain a Bachelor's Degree which would further her employment with the County; she added that the costs for the two courses would be \$828 each.

Mr. Bentley questioned how much of the course costs the County would be responsible for and Mr. Kenny replied that if attendance was approved, the County would reimburse 50% of the associated course costs, assuming the employee maintained a C average or better. In response to Mr. Thomas' inquiry, Ms. Weaver apprised that Ms. Brierton had been employed with the County for two years.

Motion was made by Mr. McDevitt, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve both requests to enroll in job-related courses as outlined above and refer same to the Personnel Committee. *Copies of both requests are on file with the minutes.*

Concluding the agenda review, Ms. Weaver apprised the agenda packet included copies of the Overtime Report, as well as the Expense and Revenue Budget Performance Reports. She pointed out that overtime use for the pay period ending August 1, 2010 was slightly higher than it had been during the prior year and noted this was due to increases in reports received by the Child Protective Services Department after normal business hours, which was beyond their control. Ms. Weaver noted that the Expense Budget Performance Report reflected 47% of the overtime budget had been expended thus far, which was below the anticipated expenditure amount. Referring to the overall Budget Performance Report figures presented, Ms. Weaver noted that 51% of the total Departmental

Budget had been expended while 37% of the anticipated revenues had been received; she added that although the revenue figure was lower than anticipated, it was not a figure they had any control over.

As there was no further business to come before the Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. McDevitt, Mr. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 12:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist